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3) Prime Minister Koizumi to leave for Central Asia on Aug. 28

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)

August 18, 2006

The government announced yesterday that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi would visit Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in Central Asia on Aug. 28-31. It is the first time for an incumbent Japanese prime minister to visit Central Asia. The purpose of Koizumi's trip to these two countries, which have abundant energy resources such as petroleum, natural gas among other resources, is to strengthen ties with them, as well as to seek to check China and Russia, which are conducting active diplomacies there.

Koizumi is expected to meet Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Uzbekistan's President Islom Karimov.

4) Fishing boat shooting incident: Senior vice foreign minister dispatched to Russia to seek release of crew

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)
August 18, 2006

Following the incident in which a Russian Border Guard patrol vessel fired at a Japanese fishing boat in waters near Kaigara-jima, part of the disputed Northern Territories, and crew member Mitsuhiro Morita (35) was killed, the government yesterday evening dispatched Senior Vice Foreign Minister Yasuhisa Shiozaki to Moscow for talks with the Russian government for the release of the fishing boat crew. MOFA Parliamentary Secretary Akiko Yamanaka yesterday arrived in Nemuro City, Hokkaido, to receive the body of Morita, which is on Kunashiri island now. She will leave for the island as early as today.

Since the incident involves jurisdiction over the Northern Islands, including investigations into and prosecution of the crew, and compensation for damage to the boat, the government intends to settle the issue in high-level talks.

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Shiozaki left Narita yesterday evening. He plans to meet with a high-level Russian government official in Moscow and strongly demand the release of the crew. He also intends to exchange views on measures to prevent a recurrence of such incidents and ways to secure safe fishing in waters near the Northern Territories.

Yamanaka intends to land on Kunashiri on a Japan Coast Guard vessel as soon as coordination with the Russian side on the handover of Morita's body is made. She said she also wanted to debrief the three surviving crewmembers.

5) Russians fire at fishing boat: Number of jurisdictional issues being faced, including handing over of the Japanese fisherman, release of crew members

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
August 18, 2006

The incident on Aug. 16 near Kaigara-jima in the northern territories in which a Russian patrol boat fired on and captured a Japanese fishing boat stems not only from the unresolved territorial dispute over the northern islands. The issue of jurisdictional control in waters in this area also is a major impediment to resolving the situation. The government, considering the northern territories as Japan's possession, is demanding the immediate release of the crewmembers, and punishment of the person responsible for shooting and killing one of the fishermen. The Russian government, which has effective control of the four islands, takes the position that "it was an appropriate action taken within our country's territory," so it is inevitable that negotiations will face rough going.

No visa access

The government has stressed the following to the Russian government following the incident: 1) the body of the slain crewman, Mitsuhiro Morita, should be handed over at once; 2) the person responsible for the shooting should be punished; and 3) Japan reserves the right to seek damage compensation for the loss of life and goods.

Currently, if former island residents or other Japanese go to the northern territories, they present identification documents as requested by Russian authorities and can visit in the form of not having a visa. This time, the government has asked that Vice Foreign Minister Akiko Yamanaka and other Foreign Ministry officials going to the northern territories to recover the body of the slain fisherman be covered under the regular no-visa procedure. Although the Russian authorities have agreed, one source pointed out, "The current situation of having to get approval for access without a visa is symbolic of the difficulty of resolving the northern territories' issue."

6) US to deploy six Aegis ships in Pacific to cope with threat from

North Korea

ASAHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
August 18, 2006

Kei Ukai, Washington

The US Defense Department has decided to double the number of Aegis ships capable of shooting down enemy ballistic missiles in the

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Pacific to six by the end of the year. This is part of efforts to cope with the threat from North Korean missiles. Rear Adm. Alan Hicks, program manager for Aegis ballistic missile defense, revealed this plan to reporters after a meeting in Alabama on Aug. 16.

The six Aegis ships carry the Standard Missile 3 (SM3) system. Hicks said: "It will become possible to shoot down short- to medium-range ballistic missiles," adding that the US would increase the number of Aegis ships carrying the SM3 system to 18 in several years.

7) US Navy to set up emergency unit for possible radioactive incident at Yokosuka base

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Excerpts)
August 18, 2006

The US Navy is planning to set up an emergency operation center (EOC) at Yokosuka Naval Base (Kanagawa Prefecture) to deal with possible radioactive incidents involving a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to be deployed at the base. According to informed sources yesterday, a dozen experts on prevention of radiation accidents from the military and the Energy Department will be stationed at the center.

The US Navy had said: "A large scale accident of radiation leakage to the outside is inconceivable." But it has been found that it is preparing to set up a system to deal with an emergency.

According to the informed sources, the EOC will be set up in a building adjacent to the US Navy Command Center located about one kilometer from the 12th birth at which the nuclear aircraft carrier George Washington (102,000 tons) will be berthed in the summer, 2008. In the center, such equipment will be installed as a monitor to see the state of the atomic furnace and an instrument to measure the volume of radiation around the furnace. In times of emergency, the expert staff will collect information and instruct measures to prevent damage.

The US Navy reportedly plans to complete a system to prevent radiation leaks in the base by the summer, 2007, and training will be carried out, assuming the leakage of water or gas containing radiation, until the carrier is deployed.

8) Sluggish responses in government, ruling camp to LDP Kato's house fire, with no comment from prime minister

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
August 18, 2006

A fire broke out and burned down the parental home and office of Liberal Democratic Party member Koichi Kato on Aug. 15. In front of the house, a man was found with stab wounds. Police have found that the man is a member of a rightwing group and now believe that he had set fire to the home in reaction to Kato's critical stance of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visiting Yasukuni Shrine. In political circles, though, sluggish responses have been made to the incident, with very few commenting on it in the government and ruling parties.

In a meeting of the Yamasaki faction yesterday, Taku Yamasaki, a friend of Kato, said: "Some take the incident as reflecting the trend of resorting to violence to try to suppress speech on Asia

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diplomacy. This is a serious problem. I would like to discuss future options for Asia diplomacy in supra-factional meetings."

Last night, senior members of the "association to consider a national secular war memorial," chaired by Yamasaki, met in Tokyo. Kato is also a member of this group. In addition to the two, Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama, New Komeito President Takenori Kanzaki, and others joined the meeting. The participants shared the view that "the incident is unforgivable." Based on the view that the prime minister's Yasukuni visits are highly undesirable, they agreed to ask the government to secure a budget for studying the feasibility of constructing a national secular war memorial.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's Office remains silent about the arson incident. An aide to the prime minister said: "There is no plan to issue a comment." Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiji Suzuki only told reporters: "We have not been informed of details, and coordination is underway."

In the opposition camp, House of Councillors member Renho of Minshuto said: "Setting fire to a house with the aim of suppressing speech is a terrorist act and unforgivable." Japanese Communist Party Secretary Ichida commented: "The arson is almost undoubtedly a dirty terrorist act to suppress political activities over the issues of Japan's war culpability and Yasukuni Shrine." Social Democratic Party President Fukushima said: "The act is to suppress freedom of speech and political activities, and that is indisputably political terrorism."

Kato told reporters yesterday: "I feel the current trend is moving in a unilateral way. This is an undesirable social trend. I have responsibility to continue to make statements."

9) 2006 LDP presidency: Securing 20 members difficult; High wall for Tanigaki and Aso to get 20 supporters

MAINICHI (Page 3) (Excerpts)
August 18, 2006

In order to run in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in September, Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki and Foreign Minister Taro Aso are now trying desperately to secure recommendations by 20 LDP lawmakers, the minimum required number to qualify for running in the presidential race. Tanigaki belongs to a 15-member faction; and the faction to which Aso belongs has only 11 members. Cooperation with other factions is absolutely necessary for them to run in the election. However, with other factions calculating that supporting Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe would be better for them, the trend of betting on the winning horse continues. Many lawmakers seem to be thinking that if they don't back Abe, they will later get the cold shoulder. In particular, Tanigaki is in a serious situation since he has assumed a stance of facing down Abe.

In a meeting of the Tanigaki faction yesterday, House of Representatives member Koichi Yamamoto expressed his sense of crisis over the Tanigaki campaign: "The Abe train is packed with passengers. Also the deck is filled to capacity. The rooftop is the only place for passengers to stand."

The Tanigaki faction initially expected support from the Niwa-Koga faction, which will not field anyone in the presidential race, and a

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faction spun from the former Miyazawa faction. Recently, however, faction heads Yuya Niwa, former health and welfare minister, and Makoto Koga, former LDP secretary general, as well as deputy head Hakuo Yanagisawa, former financial services agency chief, expressed their support for Abe. The number of supporters has increased in the Yamasaki faction, which worked with coalition to the so-called Kato rebellion (in November 2000 in which Kato called on then Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori to step down). It is now impossible for Tanigaki to get recommendation from those factions.

Therefore, all the Tanigaki faction members are now asking

individual LDP members to support Tanigaki. The faction intends to play up the value of Tanigaki, noting, "Do you mind if the party will be led by Abe or Aso, who are hawks politically?" Other factions are reacting coolly, however. A junior Yamasaki faction member commented: "Senior and mid-level members are reluctant to back Mr. Tanigaki since they are anxious about posts in the future."

10) Aso's campaign pledges in bid for LDP presidency: Would lower the age for starting compulsory school education; Advocates plan to double feeling of being affluent

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
August 18, 2006

Foreign Minister Taro Aso will announce on Aug. 21 his campaign pledges for the September Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presidential election. The pledges titled "Japan's Fundamental Power - Challenge to Vitality and Security" were revealed yesterday. In his campaign pledges, Aso advocates lowering the minimum age for starting compulsory school education and a plan to double one's feeling of affluence, which would be realized by increasing personal living space by flexibly applying public investment. In the foreign policy area, he will take a stance of attaching importance to Asia. He does not mention when he would hike the consumption tax, stipulating that priority would be placed first on strict cuts in expenditures.

Plan to double feeling of affluence

In order to create a society in which people feel they have real affluence, it is necessary to shift a policy of quantitative expansion to a policy of qualitative improvements in lifestyles. Productivity can be doubled by technical innovation. He advocates the application of public investment for projects directly linked to such quality of life areas as improving railroad crossings and laying power lines underground. He proposes a three-generation-family plan by building housing with broad living space, which can be financed by reviewing the tax system. He supports child care programs.

Economic policy

He is not a fundamentalist on fiscal reform. He would implement drastic policy tax cuts so that industries would be able to develop new technologies and move ahead in growth areas. He places top priority on first reducing expenditures and later consider increasing taxes.

Education reform

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He would lower the starting age for compulsory school education by one or two years from the current age of six. Give children during that period thorough moral and basic education.

Foreign policy

Makes efforts to stabilize ties with Asia, based on the Japan-US alliance. Good Japan-China relations are indispensable for regional stabilization in Asia. Deepen strategic ties with India. Create a diplomatic strategy with an eye on the Korean Peninsula in the future.

Simple and warm government

Aims to create a simple and warm government that is small but strong under the leadership of the prime minister. Reorganize the present Cabinet Secretariat, Cabinet Office, the Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry to be organizations that would in charge of a comprehensive national strategy.

Decentralization

He would introduce the "regional bloc or doshusei " system, making

about 10 regional blocs in the country.

Political reform

Senior research commission members would also serve as senior vice ministers and parliamentary secretaries. If necessary, commission chairmen would become cabinet members.

11) Kyodo News Agency poll on LDP presidential race: With 53% popularity rating, Abe as before picked as most appropriate to be next prime minister

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
August 18, 2006

According to a nationwide opinion poll by Kyodo News August 15 - 16, Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe held firmly to his place as the top candidate, with 53.0% of the public picking him as appropriate to succeed Prime Minister Koizumi, a jump of 4.9 points over the previous survey in July. Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki secured second place at 14.8%, a leap of 13.2 points from the previous survey. The support rate for Aso rose 5.7 points to 11.2%.

Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda (22.4% in the previous poll), who had held the second slot following Abe, announced his decision not to run in the election. About half of Fukuda's supporters seem to have shifted to Tanigaki, who is also critical of Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine. The support rate for Abe among LDP supporters reached 73.5%. Abe's views are seen as close to those of rank and file LDP members and friends of the LDP.

Regarding the prime minister's Yasukuni visit on August 15, 69.1% of those who supported Abe approved of it, outdistancing the 25.9% who replied, "The prime minister should not have visited Yasukuni."

12) Internet monitoring survey on LDP presidential election: 25% of votes from Fukuda supporters go to Tanigaki, 22% to Abe, 10 % to Aso

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YOMIURI (Page 2) (Slightly abridged)
August 18, 2006

The 3rd Internet monitoring survey on post-Koizumi contenders, carried out by the Yomiuri Shimbun on August 4 through 8, found that 25% of votes from supporters of former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda, who gave up on running in the race, went to Finance Minister Tanigaki, 22% went to Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe and 10% to Foreign Minister Aso.

Since this poll continuously monitors the same persons, it is possible to follow up changes in their replies from the previous survey.

It is believed that the largest bloc of votes from Fukuda supporters went to Tanigaki, because his stances on Asia diplomacy and other issues are close to those of Fukuda, as can be seen in his criticism of Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine. However, 27% of pollees replied, "There are no appropriate candidates for premiership," indicating that Tanigaki did not fully take over all supporters of Fukuda.

Abe maintained first place at 48%, down 1 point though. Tanigaki came in second at 15%, a rise of 3%. Aso secured 10%, up 4 points over the previous survey.

Broken down by party affiliation, 71% of those who support the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) named Abe, followed by Tanigaki with 11% and Aso with 9%. Among those who support the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), 25% supported Abe, followed by Tanigaki with 21% and Aso with 13%.

DONOVAN